

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2124

As Passed House:

March 10, 2005

Title: An act relating to increasing state participation in public transportation service and planning.

Brief Description: Increasing state participation in public transportation service and planning.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Murray, Jarrett, Simpson, Hudgins, Upthegrove, Sells, Wallace, Dickerson, B. Sullivan, Moeller, Kenney and Hasegawa).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/22/05, 3/5/05 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/10/05, 52-42.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates the Office of Transit Mobility in the Department of Transportation.
- The purpose of the Office of Transit Mobility is to coordinate transit service and planning to maximize opportunities for using public transportation to increase corridor efficiency.
- The Regional Mobility Steering Committee is created to distribute federal funds.
- The Committee has 12 members appointed by the Governor and four non-voting legislative members.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Murray, Chair; Wallace, Vice Chair; Appleton, Campbell, Dickerson, Hudgins, Kilmer, Lovick, Morris, Sells, Simpson, B. Sullivan, Takko, Upthegrove and Wood.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Woods, Ranking Minority Member; Skinner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Curtis, Ericksen, Hankins, Jarrett, Nixon, Rodne and Shabro.

Staff: Beth Redfield (786-7347).

Background:

Within the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Division of Public Transportation and Rail (Division) has responsibility for providing financial and technical assistance to local transit agencies. The Division also provides support and planning for passenger rail and freight rail, including subsidies for AMTRAK Cascade Services.

State grant funding for local public transportation is about \$42 million in the 2003-05 biennium. This represents about 1 percent of transit agency revenue. State funds provide support for special needs services, rural mobility for areas without transit services, trip reduction grants, and vanpools. The Division also administers federal grant funds for rural public transportation, elderly and disabled service grants, intercity service, and reverse commute for job access.

Together with the DOT's Urban Planning Office, the Public Transportation Division represents the DOT in discussions with local and regional transportation planning and service agencies. They also provide coordinated system planning through the Washington Transportation Plan.

There are 26 transit systems currently operating in Washington. Transit agencies plan on a six-year cycle and plans must show how they will fund program needs. Regional transportation planning organizations plan for the long term, providing guidance for transit investments.

Currently, statewide flexible funds apportioned to Washington under the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21, are distributed by a steering committee convened by the Governor.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Office of Transit Mobility (Office) is created in the DOT. The Director of the Office shall report directly to the Secretary of Transportation (Secretary).

The primary goals of the Office are to connect and coordinate transit services and planning, and to maximize opportunities to use public transportation to improve the efficiency of transportation corridors.

The duties of the Office include:

- developing a statewide strategic plan that creates common goals for transit agencies and reduces competing plans for cross-jurisdictional service;

- developing a park and ride lot program;
- encouraging long-range transit planning;
- providing public transportation expertise to improve linkages between regional transportation planning organizations and transit agencies;
- strengthening policies for inclusion of transit and transportation demand management strategies in route development and corridor plan standards, and budget proposals;
- providing staff assistance to the Regional Mobility Steering Committee established in section 4 of this act. The Office shall report periodically to the Steering Committee identifying needs for increased transit and multi-modal coordination and corridor efficiency;
- developing standards to integrate transit and demand management strategies with regional and local land use plans in order to reduce traffic and improve mobility and access;
- producing recommendations for the public transportation section of the Washington Transportation Plan; and
- participating in all aspects of corridor planning, including freight planning, ferry system planning, and passenger rail planning.

In forming the Office, the Secretary is directed to use existing resources to the greatest extent possible. Specifically, the Office shall take over functions as appropriate from the Division of Public Transportation and Rail and the Urban Planning Office. Those functions include, but not limited to, the administration of the commute trip reduction program, special needs transportation grants, and planning and construction of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes.

The Office is directed to establish measurable performance objectives for evaluating the success of its initiatives and progress toward accomplishing the overall goals of the Office. The Office will be subject to review by the Transportation Performance Audit Board (TPAB).

Local and regional transportation agencies are directed to adopt common transportation goals. The Office is given the responsibility to review local and regional plans to ensure the efficient integration of multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional planning.

The Regional Mobility Steering Committee is created. It is composed of 12 voting members and four non-voting legislative members. The 12 members are as follows: The Secretary of the Department of Transportation or his or her designee, the Director of the Transportation Improvement Board or his or her designee, and 10 members appointed by the Governor. The appointees include three representatives of transit agencies from an area with a population more than 500,000, one from an area with a population of 100,000 to 500,000, and one from an area with a population less than \$100,000; one representative of nonmotorized transportation interests; one representative of transit users; one representative of commute trip

reduction users; one representative from a regional transportation planning organization; one representative of counties; one representative from cities; and one representative from the largest transit union in the state.

The Regional Mobility Steering Committee will distribute 22 percent of the statewide, flexible funds made available under the successor act to TEA-21.

In granting funds, the Regional Mobility Steering Committee shall consider whether projects enhance the efficiency of regional corridors and reduce delay for people and goods.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Thirty-five percent of commuters in the Seattle central business district, 17 percent of commuters in the Bellevue central business district, and 36 percent of University of Washington commuters use transit. If that 35 percent share of Seattle commuters shifted from transit, we'd be in trouble. The question is how can we make transit even better. How can we integrate transit and our road system and shape the policy that integrates the two. Regarding transit, the state might not own it, run it, or pay for it, but we must understand what works so that we can improve it and identify where the needs are. State funding would be provided to the most effective investments in public transportation, so that we would reward that which works. Local transit agencies would work toward common goals, not that they don't already, but things can be improved. Our state's transportation system should take full advantage of the benefits made possible by all modes of transportation. Our state should also work on things like making corridors work most effectively, particularly those corridors that are most congested during rush hour.

The DOT is supportive of an effort to improve connectivity of transit and other modes of transportation. We believe additional work is needed to strengthen the integration of transit and highway planning. We understand that local transit agencies already coordinate plans, programs, and schedules. However, the state currently does not ensure that transit plans connect or share common goals. The state can play a guiding role in collaboratively developing a statewide strategic plan that would create common goals and provide resulting efficient cross-jurisdictional service. We agree that the state should lead in motivating transit agencies to better coordination, especially in light of limited resources and growing demand. This proposal is consistent with growth management, which calls for an efficient transportation system. The DOT can provide an important role by giving increased planning and technical assistance to transit agencies as they work through these issues across the state. The DOT supports additional funding of projects like those listed in the bill which improve the efficiency of moving people through jurisdictions and throughout the entire system.

The Office shouldn't be separated from the Public Transportation and Rail Division. The goal is to have public transportation focused in one place in the DOT. Keep it in the existing division. It's possible that it can work having the Office reporting to the Secretary, but the entire division should report to the Secretary, instead of splitting it up. It is important to note that public transportation has higher visibility today than it has had in the past. The DOT has questions about how the distribution of federal funds in section 6 would operate.

The bill recognizes the need for multi-modal solutions to Washington's transportation problems. It also promotes better coordination of transit planning, through long range and statewide strategic planning. It elevates the visibility of public transportation at the state level, especially with the direct report to the Secretary. Finally, it promotes smarter corridor investments and better use of the existing highway system by encouraging transit and demand management. Some suggestions for the bill include: directing the Office to working with the DOT as other divisions develop corridor plans; directing the Office to work with transit agencies to work with the DOT as it develops corridor plans; and to tie transit planning into land use, directing the development of standards to integrate transit and transportation demand management into local and regional land use plans.

The bill continues recent work between the DOT and transit agencies on the Washington Transportation Plan. Regarding the notion of establishing common goals among transit agencies, King County wants to preserve the ability to have unique local goals. In the area of reviewing and developing local plans, we don't want to add new planning requirements and would rather work with what we currently have.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Murray, prime sponsor; Jim Shipman, Washington State Transit Association; Eric Gleason, King County Metro; Judy Giniger, Washington State Department of Transportation; and Jessyn Schor, Washington Public Interest Research Group.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.